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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused May 15 news coverage on Nobel Laureate Economist Paul Krugman's speech in Taiwan Thursday; on President Ma Ying-jeou's signing of the two United Nations human rights covenants; and on the DPP's planned mass demonstration on May 17 against the Ma administration's first year in office. With respect to editorials and commentaries, a column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed the recent election of the United States to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The column said most UN member nations hope to work with the Obama administration, which differs from the former Bush administration on human rights issues, to solve global problems. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" commented on President Barack Obama's first one hundred days in office. The editorial said judging from several recent polls in the United States, Obama showed his leadership by successfully rebuilding American people's confidence that the situation will get better tomorrow, even though many tasks remain to be fulfilled. End summary.

A) "The United Nations' Expectations for the Obama Administration"

The "International Lookout" column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 130,000] wrote (5/15):

"The United States was elected to the UN Human Rights Council with a total of 167 votes. The move symbolized that the Obama administration is indeed different from the Bush Administration in terms of human rights issues. ... The reason [behind the U.S. seeking a seat on the council] was simple -- namely, the United States cannot step aside from the Council, or it will indicate that there is a gap between the United States' human rights criteria and that of most UN members. How can one act alone to safeguard human rights? But the Bush administration was like that, arrogantly distancing itself from the group. The United States will be in no position to criticize the UN Human Rights report in the future.

"The Obama administration evidently has new considerations in terms of [the priority of] its interests; it understands that while criticizing other countries' human rights, Washington should also examine itself -- as in the cases of closing down the Guantanamo Bay prison and banning the interrogation tactics that have violated international laws. The United States' foreign policy also shows a tendency to work with international mechanisms. ... The United States won 167 out of the 191 votes at the UN General Assembly (same votes as those for China). The reason why it could win so many votes was because the UN member nations have expectations for the Obama Administration. They hope that the United States can work with the UN to resolve global problems and not just do things alone simply based on its likes and dislikes. ..."

B) "The Obama Way"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (5/15):

"... Opinion polls show that Obama has achieved some success in

rebuilding America's confidence. ... Whether many of Obama's policies should be considered pragmatic or inconsistent or weak remains controversial. No where is this issue more conspicuous than his foreign affairs ventures where an 'Obama style,' different from those of past American president, has emerged. This 'Obama doctrine' is marked by flexibility and modesty. ...

"The most critical element of skillful leadership is to evoke people's confidence. Although such a trust is usually built on the leader's success in solving certain urgent problems at hand, more importantly, it is concerned about a vision for the future. Right now, Obama's refreshing change has inspired so much confidence in the American people that they are willing to give him more chances because they share the president's conviction that tomorrow under his leadership will definitely be better. Americans realize and agree they need patience."

YOUNG